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Introduction to Alexander von Staël-Holstein's Article "On a Peking Edition of the Tibetan Kanjur Which Seems to be Unknown in the West"

Edited for publication by
JONATHAN A. SILK

Baron Alexander Wilhelm von Staël-Holstein is probably unlikely to be mentioned immediately in a contemporary conversation about great Buddhist scholars. Yet he was, without a doubt, a splendid researcher. Through a life filled with turmoil, he accomplished a very great deal, mostly in the field of Buddhist Studies, and again, largely in the realm of philological work. Among other studies, he edited texts (including the famous *Kāśyapa-parivarta*), reconstructed lost Sanskrit materials from Chinese and Tibetan, and investigated Sino-Tibetan Buddhist art.¹ He was also one of the first to devote serious attention to the problems raised by the textual history of Tibetan canonical collections. The article presented here has been known to a small circle of scholars for some years, but the number of copies in circulation was very small. In fact, I know of only two originals, one held in the Harvard-Yenching Library, the other in the "Sylvain Lévi collection" (the second according to the kind information of Prof. D. S. Ruegg). The article was printed, but never published, as "On a Peking edition of the Tibetan Kanjur which seems to be unknown in the West." It was apparently to appear in the *Harvard Sino-Indian Series*, vol. 3. On the back cover of what we might term the "pre-print" is found "Peking – Lazarist Press," and on the front "Peking 1934." As I have observed before,² the copy in

1. For appreciations and bibliographies, see Serge ELISSÉEFF: "Staël-Holstein's Contribution to Asiatic Studies," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 3 (1938): 1-8, and Ernst SCHIERLITZ: "In Memory of Alexander Wilhelm Baron von Staël-Holstein," *Monumenta Serica* 3 (1938): 286-91.
2. In *The Heart Sutra in Tibetan: A Critical Edition of the Two Recensions Contained in the Kanjur*. Wiener Studien zur Tibetologie und Buddhismuskunde 34 (Vienna: Arbeitskreis für Tibetische und Buddhistische Studien, Universität Wien 1994): 24, note 2. I neglected to mention at that time that the same memo had been noted and transcribed by Helmut EIMER: "Two versions of a Volume Within the Lhasa Kanjur," in Helga Uebach and Jampa L. Panglung, eds., *Tibetan Studies: Proceedings of the 4th Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies*. *Studia Tibetica* 2 (München: Kommission für Zentralasiatische Studien, Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften 1988): 149, note 2.

Harvard is inscribed on the title page by Staël-Holstein himself to Dean G. H. Chase. The note says: "If the editors [? almost illegible] approve of my suggest[ion] these pages will be published as the fi[rst] twenty pages of vol IV of the Harvard Sino-Indian Series]. Compare my letter [of] February 27th 1 [date obscured]." Given this, it cannot be considered absolutely certain whether publication was intended in volume III or IV of the *Harvard Sino-Indian Series*, although volume III is the more likely.³ In any case, that the article has lost little of its value in the sixty-five (!) years since it was written is a testimony to the excellence of Staël-Holstein's scholarship, and also perhaps to the failure of later scholars to follow his lead into certain areas of comparative Sino-Tibetan studies. It is certainly high time that this excellent example of his fruitful research be presented to an audience wider than those few scholars who were able to obtain photocopies of the rare extant prints of the original publication. I am therefore grateful to the editors of the *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, and to the authorities of the Harvard-Yenching Library, who have generously given their permission for this publication.

In preparing the following article for publication, I have done little, and have changed the basic text not at all; I have added a few additional references, and clarified some of Staël-Holstein's own abbreviated references. While these may have been clear to an audience of peers sixty years ago, today many are likely to be obscure to most readers. Other than this, I have made only the following cosmetic changes: I have italicized quoted Tibetan and Sanskrit; in the original, everything was printed in Roman type, with the exception of several italicizations for emphasis. I have indented the long quotation from the colophon, which was not indented in the original. And I have modified the transliteration schemes

3. On page 20 of his "On two recent reconstructions of a Sanskrit hymn transliterated with Chinese characters in the X century A. D.," *Yenching Journal of Chinese Studies* [*Yen-ching hsüeh-pao* 燕京學報] 17 (1935): 1-38, Staël-Holstein writes of his "article, which has already been printed and which will form part of the forthcoming third volume of the Harvard Sino-Indian Series," As far as I know, the only volumes of the Harvard Sino-Indian Series to have actually appeared are the following: Friedrich WELLER, *Index to the Tibetan Translation of the Kāçyapaparivarta*. Harvard Sino-Indian Series I (Cambridge: Harvard-Yenching Institute 1933), and the same scholar's *Index to the Indian Text of the Kāçyapaparivarta*. Harvard Sino-Indian Series II, Part 1 (Cambridge: Harvard-Yenching Institute 1935; Reprinted in *Friedrich Weller: Kleine Schriften*. Wilhelm Rau, ed. Two Volumes. Glasenapp-Stiftung Band 26 [Stuttgart / Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner 1987]: I.543-605).

of both Sanskrit and Tibetan, bringing the latter into line with the so-called Wylie system; Staël-Holstein's original used older systems, which I supposed might be unfamiliar to contemporary readers. The original page numbers are inserted in bold carets, thus «1», in order to facilitate reference to the original, which is sometimes cited. All adjustments, modifications and corrections I offer are added only in notes.

The *footnotes* are entirely mine, and are marked with lower case roman letters, while the *end-notes* are those of Staël-Holstein's original article, marked by arabic numerals, followed by a right parenthesis. In my footnotes, in addition to providing complete references, in a few instances I have sought to clarify issues left unclear by Staël-Holstein. In only a very few cases I have corrected what I believe to be errors made by Staël-Holstein.

Staël-Holstein's original article was accompanied by eight pages of plates containing sixteen folio leaves in Tibetan, Chinese and Mongolian. I regret that, in the end, it has not been possible to reproduce all of these plates of the original article. The quality of the plates in the xerox copy I have is not high, and despite the fine help of Ms. Ruohong Li at Harvard, I have not been able to locate the originals of plates V, VI, VIIb and VIIIb, which include leaves from the 1700 Kanjur stated by Staël-Holstein to belong to the National Library of Peking⁴. I trust this will not prove a hardship to very many readers. In this regard, I must also mention the excellent and generous assistance given me by my wife, Yōko, in preparing the new plates on the computer, for which I am most grateful. Some corrections and suggestions were kindly offered by Dr. Helmut Eimer, and Gene Smith, for which I am very appreciative. I am of course responsible for the remaining errors of mine (although not for any of those of Staël-Holstein which, despite my best efforts, may rest uncorrected).

4. Staël-Holstein's original captions for the plates I have been unable to reproduce read as follows:

Plate V: The original (above) and the amended (below) version of the first page of a Tibetan Dkar chag (table of contents).

Plate VI: Pages 1A and 8A of a Chinese Dkar chag (table of contents) of the A. D. 1700 edition of the Tibetan Kanjur.

Plate VII: A page of the Tibetan translation of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarikasūtra* as it appears ... in the A. D. 1700 edition (below). Note the emendations on lines 1 and 5 of the A. D. 1700 page.

Plate VIII: Page 50b of volume 'I as it appears ... in the A. D. 1700 edition (below).

It should be noted here that the edition discussed by Staël-Holstein is now to be found in the Rare Book room of the Harvard-Yenching Library, where it is catalogued as Tib 1803.7 / 14. It has an accession stamp of June 28, 1939, and was acquired from the Sino-Indian Institute in Peking. The text is printed in red on folios approximately 69 × 24 cm, with a printed area of about 60 × 14 cm. Volumes 29, 45, 53, 59 and 61 are missing from the set.⁵ It is remarkable that the very volume 61, or *hi* in the Tibetan system (a part of the *Phal po che*), which belongs to this set is currently to be found in the Kalamazoo Valley Museum in Kalamazoo, Michigan. How this volume got separated from the volumes acquired by Staël-Holstein is not known exactly, but it was purchased for \$50 by Mr. Albert M. Todd already in 1926 from Edward Barrett, a New York fur dealer who apparently had something of a sideline in peddling Chinese “curiosities.” Barrett stated in his description which accompanied the volume: “This book was procured by Edward Barrett from the Imperial Library in Peking, China, 1924.” One certainly gains the impression that the “procurement” was not an entirely kosher transaction, but given the turmoil in China in those days, it is unlikely we will ever learn what actually happened. (It is interesting, however, that Barrett knew when [he dated it to 1693], where and by whom the volume had been printed.) The volume was presented to the Kalamazoo Public Library in November 1932 by the heirs of Mr. Todd, under the terms of his will, and microfilmed already in 1942 by Horace Poleman of the Library of Congress. But it apparently remained otherwise unknown until it was identified in 1986 by my friend Bruce Cameron Hall. Dr. Hall, who had worked to catalogue the Harvard collection, is remarkably enough perhaps the one person in the world who could have recognized on sight this volume as coming from the same set as the Harvard-Yenching Kanjur. While a post-doctoral fellow at the University of Michigan, he investigated local Tibetan holdings and discovered the Kalamazoo volume. It is a further coincidence that I held, during the period when I was preparing the present article, a post at Western Michigan University, in Kalamazoo, which enabled me to easily examine this volume.

Jonathan A. Silk

5. I owe this information to the unpublished paper of Bruce Cameron HALL, “Tibetan Tripiṭakas and Harvard-Yenching Library,” 1987.